

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
January 28 - February 3, 2011

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1. [Clinton, Gates Lead U.S. Delegation to Munich Conference](#) (02-03-2011)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Defense Secretary Robert Gates will meet with more than 350 top-level decisionmakers from across the globe at the 47th Munich Security Conference February 4–6.

Clinton and Gates are expected to make major speeches on security issues such as limiting theater nuclear warheads and will quite likely include remarks on events unfolding in Egypt. National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon is also attending the annual security conference.

On February 5, Clinton and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will exchange instruments of ratification for the New START treaty, according to State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley. Once the exchange occurs, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty enters into force.

The treaty reduces the two nations' nuclear arsenals to 1,550 nuclear warheads each in seven years. The United States and Russia hold 95 percent of the nuclear weapons in the world.

The treaty was signed April 8, 2010, by President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Prague. It is a centerpiece of Obama's foreign policy program and reflects his broader world view. He was awarded the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to foster arms control and nuclear nonproliferation worldwide.

“This is the most significant arms control agreement in nearly two decades,” Obama said after the U.S. Senate voted in favor of the treaty. “And it will make us safer.”

The U.S. Senate approved ratification December 22 and Russia’s parliament gave its final approval in January. Obama signed ratification documents February 2.

In a prepared statement February 1, Crowley said that “a responsible partnership between the world’s two largest nuclear powers to limit our nuclear arsenals while maintaining strategic stability is imperative to promoting global security. With New START, the United States and Russia have reached another milestone in our bilateral relationship and continue the momentum Presidents Obama and Medvedev created with the ‘reset’ nearly two years ago.”

NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES

Delegates attending the three-day security conference are expected to discuss a range of international security challenges, from the economic crisis to cyberwar. Much of the agenda will focus on cybersecurity, disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation, and the economic crisis and its security implications.

Conference chairman Wolfgang Ischinger said in late January that this year’s conference of international policymakers is a milestone on the way to a new and comprehensive Euro-Atlantic security community.

“I have high hopes for us to be able to show that the course has been set towards cooperation and the use of new opportunities so that we may design a coherent and even more comprehensive security community based on the results of the 2010 Lisbon NATO summit,” Ischinger said in a news interview January 21.

The security conference was founded in 1962 as the Wehrkunde Conference by German publisher Ewald-Heinrich von Kleist-Schmenzin, who was succeeded in 1999 by Horst Teltschik, the former vice-head of the German Chancellery. Ischinger, a German diplomat, became chairman in 2009.

2. Statement at OSCE on Situation in Egypt (02-03-2011)

United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Situation in Egypt as delivered by Charge d’Affaires Carol Fuller to the Permanent Council, Vienna

After days of peaceful protests in Cairo and other cities in Egypt, yesterday we saw violent attacks on peaceful demonstrators and journalists. The United States denounces these attacks and calls on all engaged in demonstrations currently taking place in Egypt to do so peacefully.

The use of violence to intimidate the Egyptian people must stop. It is dangerous to Egypt, and a direct threat to the aspirations of the Egyptian people. We strongly call for restraint.

We don’t know who is behind them, but given the claims the attackers are making as far as support for the Mubarak regime, there is a clear responsibility by the Egyptian government to repudiate and end these attacks.

In doing so, the government must clearly distinguish between those exercising their rights to peacefully assemble and express their views, and those using violence to intimidate and suppress expression. Peaceful protesters should not be intimidated.

We support the universal human rights of the Egyptian people, including the right to freedom of expression, of association, and of assembly, as well as freedom of media, to access information, and to communicate.

We continue to stand up for democracy and the universal rights that all human beings deserve, in Egypt and around the world.

As President Obama said, we support an orderly transition to a government that is responsive to the aspirations of the Egyptian people. This orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful, and it must begin now.

This is about more than just Egypt. The people of the Middle East, like people everywhere, are seeking a chance to contribute and to have a role in the decisions that will shape their lives. It is a concern for all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

3. Clinton Leads Meeting on U.S. Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking (02-02-2011)

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says human trafficking is an issue of “grave importance” the United States must continue to address.

Clinton led the annual President’s Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons meeting, held in Washington February 1.

“Anywhere from 12 million to 27 million people are currently held in forced labor, bonded labor, or forced prostitution,” she told the task force, a group that includes leaders from across government agencies.

Attorney General Eric Holder, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Labor Secretary Hilda Solis were at the meeting, along with leaders from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture.

Clinton said the victims of human trafficking “range from the men and women enslaved in fields, factories and brothels to the girls and boys whose childhoods have been shattered and stolen, to the parents whose children have vanished. Whether they are far from home or in their own villages, they need and deserve our help and the help of the world.”

She said the State Department has employed a series of initiatives to combat human trafficking, including publishing its annual Trafficking in Persons report every May. The report, which ranks countries around the world based on compliance with the international Trafficking Victims Protection Act, included an assessment of the United States for the first time in 2010.

“As President Obama has made clear, we want to be the best champion for our own ideals, and we want to live up to those ideals ourselves,” Clinton said.

In addition to the report, Clinton said the department’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security will establish an anti-trafficking unit to “centralize case referrals and command at headquarters and offer training to all agents, particularly on how to work with victims.”

The secretary emphasized that identifying victims is a top priority for U.S. agencies. She said that, of the millions of people held in servitude, fewer than 50,000 have officially been identified as victims. She said many others are either ignored, or worse, treated as criminals.

“We need to do more to identify the true victims of human trafficking and help restore them to participation in our society,” Clinton said.

In a joint effort to combat trafficking in persons, the Department of Justice announced an initiative to create specialized anti-trafficking coordination teams.

“These teams will bring together federal agents and prosecutors across agency lines to combat human trafficking threats, dismantle human trafficking networks and bring traffickers to justice,” [Holder said in his February 1 announcement](#).

He said the effort will be made in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Labor.

Holder said the launch of these teams will enable the U.S. government “to leverage the assets and expertise of each federal enforcement agency more effectively than ever before.”

He said agency leaders are “energized by the strength of our partnerships” but remain “firm in our resolve to do more ... to end human trafficking.”

Holder said that in 2010 the Department of Justice prosecuted more human trafficking cases than ever before, sending a powerful signal the United States will not tolerate trafficking in persons.

4. U.S. Says Violence in Egypt Must Stop, Transition Must Begin (02-02-2011)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The White House strongly condemns “outrageous and deplorable violence” that has broken out in Cairo and other Egyptian cities and has renewed its call for political change to begin in the country.

“It is imperative that the violence that we’re seeing stop and that the transition that was spoken about last night begin immediately,” White House press secretary Robert Gibbs told reporters in Washington February 2.

According to press reports, anti-government protesters and armed supporters of President Hosni Mubarak have clashed, leaving hundreds wounded.

“If any of the violence is instigated by the government, it should stop immediately,” Gibbs said.

The political unrest in Egypt will take some time to resolve, he said, and “regardless of the amount of that time, it is tremendously important that restraint and nonviolence carry the day during this important transition.”

Gibbs said the Obama administration has repeatedly told the Mubarak government that violence is unacceptable, and that President Obama “reiterated our strong call for nonviolence” during his call to Mubarak on February 1. State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton gave newly appointed Vice President Omar Suleiman the same message in a February 2 phone call.

Obama’s conversation with Mubarak was candid, Gibbs said, and he told the Egyptian leader that the time for change had come.

“I do not think the president could have been clearer with the president of Egypt last night,” Gibbs said.

“The Egyptian people need to see change.” Meaningful political transition “must include opposition voices and parties being involved in this process as we move toward free and fair elections,” Gibbs said.

Only the Egyptian people can determine when their demands have been met, he added.

“Nobody in Washington will determine the range of freedom of assembly or freedom of speech for those in Tahrir Square. And I don’t think anybody in Tahrir Square is looking for us to gauge what the fence posts are on those freedoms,” Gibbs said.

But the Egyptian people do not want to see appointments or speeches, he continued. “They want to see concrete action by their government. And I think that that’s what the world waits for.”

The spokesman also said there is “no acceptable excuse” for the shutdown of Egypt’s Internet, mobile phone and satellite communications.

“Those are part of the basic human freedoms that people everywhere should enjoy,” Gibbs said.

The Obama administration is continuing to respond to a fluid situation in Egypt, and “what we’re watching is history being made,” Gibbs said.

Looking ahead, the Obama administration wants to have a “continued stable partnership” with the Egyptian people and expects that “whatever government comes next, that government respect the treaties that ... the previous Egyptian governments have entered into.”

The United States has important relationships with Egypt and other countries throughout the Middle East, and “we seek to engage all of those entities in bringing about comprehensive peace to the region,” Gibbs said.

“That outlives any particular administration, and I think that’s what people throughout the world expect to see,” he said.

5. Senior U.S. Leaders in Iraq Outline the Way Ahead (02-01-2011)

By Merle David Kellerhals, Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The two top American officials in Iraq told a Senate committee February 1 that the U.S. transition from a military mission to a civilian mission in Iraq is progressing on schedule and with the full cooperation of the Iraqi government and security forces.

In joint remarks prepared for the hearing, U.S. Ambassador James Jeffrey and Army General Lloyd Austin told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that this year will be both critical and challenging — “one that sets the conditions for Iraq’s continued progress.”

“Security trends are good but the environment is complex,” they added. “Iraq still faces dangerous and determined enemies, each with their own objectives and tactics.”

President Obama and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki of Iraq have committed to the total withdrawal of U.S. forces by the end of December.

“For the United States to achieve its goals, the government of Iraq must provide for Iraq’s internal security, develop external defense capabilities, and lead and manage its institutions,” the two leaders’ joint statement said.

One of the major concerns of Congress during this period of transition is the ability of Iraqi security forces to provide sufficient and continuing security for the huge U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and its smaller consulates in Basra, Erbil, Kirkuk and Mosul.

Jeffrey and Austin told senators that Iraq’s security environment will be relatively stable in January 2012 after the last of the U.S. military forces have been withdrawn from the country. They based their assessment on a number of factors that include the assumption that al-Qaida in Iraq will remain capable of some attacks, but will lack public support. This lack of support would effectively and substantially weaken the terrorist threat.

They also added that the Sunni insurgency will continue to present a low-level threat and that Shiite extremists will continue to be funded, trained and equipped by neighboring Iran.

“Violence will be masked by criminality, illicit smuggling, and extortion — a blend of extremism and crime,” the leaders said. While the Iraqi security forces increasingly will be capable of providing internal security, they will still be developing the capability of providing for external defense, they said.

Jeffrey and Austin told senators that as the military draws down, civilians — diplomats, aid workers and advisers — are moving into a more prominent role to support Iraq in achieving its political, economic, security and diplomatic goals.

“The Department of State is ready to take the lead. But we need the support and resources to finish the job,” Jeffrey told the Senate committee.

Jeffrey and Austin said that the United States faces a historic opportunity and a critical window to help Iraq emerge as a strategic partner and a force for stability and moderation in what has often been a troubled region.

“We cannot afford to let the gains we have sacrificed so much for slip away before they are cemented,” they said.

6. Obama Says Peaceful Transition in Egypt “Must Begin Now” (02-01-2011)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama says a peaceful, meaningful and orderly political transition in Egypt “must begin now” and must include a broad spectrum of Egyptian voices, including the government’s political opposition.

In remarks at the White House February 1, Obama said he had spoken with President Hosni Mubarak shortly after the Egyptian leader announced that he would not seek a sixth term as president.

Egypt is scheduled to hold presidential elections in September. However, press reports have indicated that many of the protesters who have gathered throughout Egypt over the past eight days are insisting that the Egyptian leader immediately step down.

Obama said “it is not the role of any other country to determine Egypt's leaders. Only the Egyptian people can do that.” But he said he told Mubarak that an orderly political transition in Egypt “must be meaningful, it must be peaceful and it must begin now.”

Mubarak recognizes that “the status quo is not sustainable and that a change must take place,” Obama said.

“We've borne witness to the beginning of a new chapter in the history of a great country and a longtime partner of the United States,” the president said.

Throughout the unrest, the United States has called on all sides to refrain from violence. Obama commended Egypt’s military forces for showing restraint and urged them to continue efforts to ensure that there will be peaceful change.

The United States stands for the universal human rights values allowing free assembly, free speech and the right to access information, he said, and it will continue to stand up for democratic values in Egypt and elsewhere around the world.

Obama said the passion and the dignity of the Egyptian people have inspired Americans and others around the world, and that the United States hears their voices.

Addressing the Egyptian people, he said, “I have an unyielding belief that you will determine your own destiny, and seize the promise of a better future for your children and your grandchildren,” and he affirmed his own commitment to the partnership between the United States and Egypt.

He cited the “sense of community” among Egyptians and between the protesters and the military, as well as those who surrounded Egypt’s renowned National Museum in Cairo to protect it from looters.

A new generation of Egyptians is protecting the country's national treasures, representing "a human chain connecting a great and ancient civilization to the promise of a new day," he said.

The president said the United States stands ready to "provide any assistance that is necessary to help the Egyptian people as they manage the aftermath of these protests."

President Obama's Remarks on Situation in Egypt

7. U.S. Congressional Leaders Support Democratic Reforms in Egypt (02-01-2011)

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. congressional leaders are echoing President Obama's call for a peaceful transition to democratic, economic and social reforms in Egypt.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry, a Democrat from Massachusetts, urged the Egyptian government and security forces "to exercise restraint in dealing with protesters and to respect the human rights of its citizens to seek greater participation in their own government."

In a January 28 statement, Kerry also said the time has come for Egypt "to urgently improve governance and transparency, open the field to true opposition and new political identities, create real avenues for listening to and considering the wants and needs of their citizens, and demonstrate to younger generations that they will have better opportunities tomorrow than they do today."

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Republican from Florida, said in a statement January 28 that she is "deeply concerned about the Egyptian government's heavy-handed response" to protesters and said it is "imperative that all parties involved avoid violence."

"For far too long the democratic hopes of the Egyptian people have been suppressed," she added.

Protests in Egypt's major cities — Cairo, Alexandria, Suez and others — have now continued for eight days and stem from political unrest for democratic and economic reforms, protest against rising food prices and cutbacks in subsidies, and perceptions of a lack of representative government.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who has held his position since 1981, has accepted the resignations of his Cabinet and appointed his chief of intelligence, Omar Suleiman, vice president. It marks the first time in more than 30 years that the nation has had a vice president.

The country is set to hold presidential elections in September, and the Obama administration has called for the vote to be free, fair and credible.

U.S. House Speaker John Boehner, a Republican from Ohio, said during an appearance January 30 on Fox News Sunday that the United States has a "responsibility to respond" to any country "where people are calling out for freedom and democracy."

"Clearly, reforms need to occur in Egypt," Boehner said, adding that the Egyptian people have expressed "legitimate grievances ... that need to be addressed."

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California Representative Howard Berman, the senior Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said in a statement January 31 that Egypt “has long needed a more inclusive government, responsive to the desires of its citizens.” He also called for the United States to remain committed to assistance programs for Egypt, both military and civilian.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky, said January 30 on NBC’s Meet the Press that Egypt is an “indispensable ally” and it is “up to the Egyptians to determine what their leadership is.”

Obama spoke with Mubarak by phone January 28, and [said in remarks that day](#) that the United States will “continue to stand up for the rights of the Egyptian people and work with their government in pursuit of a future that is more just, more free and more hopeful.”

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton [praised the U.S.-Egypt partnership](#) in comments January 30, and emphasized the United States stands ready to offer any assistance requested in speeding democratic reforms.
